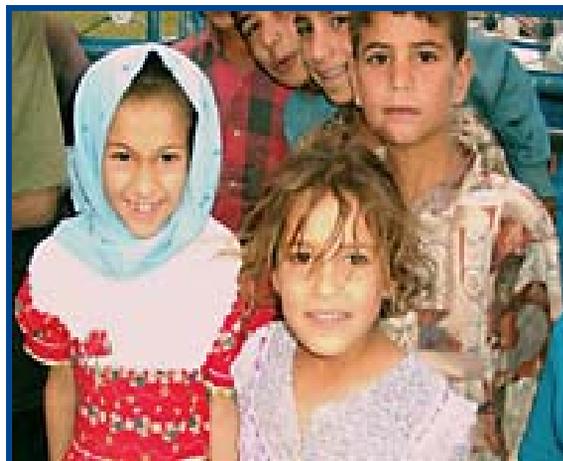




Child Survival and Basic Health in Iraq November 2003

Challenges:

Health conditions in Iraq deteriorated substantially under Saddam Hussein. The child mortality rates in Iraq have more than doubled in the past ten years, placing Iraq among the 30 worst rated countries in the world. By 2003, almost a third of the children in the south and central part of the country suffered from malnutrition. One child out of eight did not survive to his or her fifth birthday. After the war, health services were disrupted and hospitals and clinics were looted. Health professionals were unable to maintain training, and professional skills were lacking.



Children in An Nasiriyah. Photo by Sheri Fink, IMC

Goals:

USAID is working with the Ministry of Health and the Coalition Provisional Authority to provide basic health care services and reduce death among children under five years old. Activities include:

- In-service training of health care professionals to increase the quality of health care provision.
- Immunize 4.3 million children.
- Equip primary health care centers to meet the essential health needs of Iraqis.
- Promptly treat diarrhea and pneumonia in children.



Left: Oral polio immunization of a newborn in Iraq.

Progress:

- USAID is increasing access to basic health care for Iraqis by equipping 600 health care centers with a focus on previously lacking services, such as obstetrics care.
- Three million children have been immunized; 20,000 more children are immunized each month.
- USAID partners are training 2,200 health professionals in 18 governorates and 8,000 child community care center volunteers.
- USAID and UNICEF are helping Ministry of Health professionals to diagnose and treat diarrhea and acute respiratory illnesses.

The University of Mosul and the Mississippi Consortium for International Development are partnering to reduce childhood illness and improve public health and sanitation through teacher training, civic development, and NGO strengthening throughout Iraq. The partnership is part of USAID's Higher Education Grants Program.

Working in close cooperation with Iraqis and the Coalition Provisional Authority to improve the lives of Iraqis, USAID is restoring critical infrastructure, supporting the delivery of healthcare and education, expanding economic opportunities, and improving governance in Iraq.

Toward a Healthy Iraq



Above: Medina, mother of 10, worries that her children will become sick from impure water and unable to receive care. Photo by IMC.

Right: Medina's daughter and granddaughter in Dhi Qar. Photo by IMC.

Since the war's end, over 3,000 Marsh Arabs have returned home—and thousands more are expected. Abdul Salaam, head of the Chibayish water department stated, "We are so amazed by the returning marshes and welcome the return of our Arab brothers, but we are afraid of the sickness that may come due to our few health resources."

To address these concerns, USAID partner International Medical Corps (IMC) is rehabilitating and equipping hospitals and clinics throughout the Dhi Qar Governorate, including the marshes.



In Tikrit (Salah ad Din), 50 women attended a two-day seminar on maternal health, including the importance of routine examinations, the stages of pregnancy and labor, and complications to pregnancy and labor. On the second day they discussed newborn infant care, including vaccinations, diarrhea, and respiratory problems.



An Iraqi family visits a doctor at a primary health care center in the Karkh district of Baghdad, Iraq. Photo by Thomas Hartwell

Seventy percent of child deaths in Iraq are due to preventable infectious diseases of diarrhea and acute pneumonia. Younger children are at greater risk for diarrheal disease deaths.

USAID assists the Ministry of Health in:

- Providing oral rehydration salts (ORS) throughout the country and training health staff in their correct use.
- Promoting breastfeeding and appropriate child feeding practices.
- Providing health clinics with antibiotics for acute pneumonia.
- Training health staff and families in the importance of seeking prompt care for pneumonia.
- Providing clean water in cities through infrastructure projects.



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